

Being Prepared for Winter Storms Can Protect You from a Variety of Disasters

Kansans are used to extreme changes in the weather.

In the spring, it is not unusual to see a beautiful azure sky in the morning replaced with ominous, dark storm clouds and tornado warnings in the afternoon. Because we live in the middle of "Tornado Alley," most of us have become accustomed to rapid changes in the weather that threaten our safety.

Winter weather in Kansas can also change rapidly as we experienced in late November with record highs near 80 one week and temperatures plummeting to well below freezing the next. Blizzards and ice storms have been known to move in rapidly and can have dire consequences if we are not prepared for them.

Families should be prepared to "shelter-in-place" should roads become impassable and/or essential services such as electric power be lost during a weather emergency. Other natural or man-made disasters, such as a terrorist attack may require all of us to stay in our homes or evacuate the area, and families should design a plan to help get them through these tough times and even save their lives.



All preparedness plans should include an Emergency Kit with the following items placed in sturdy containers that can be located and carried easily:

- ❑ Bottled drinking water (One gallon per person per day to last three days)
- ❑ Canned or dried foods (A three-day supply for each person)
- ❑ Formula and baby food if there is an infant in the home
- ❑ Manual can opener
- ❑ Eating utensils
- ❑ Battery-powered radio/TV
- ❑ Flashlight
- ❑ Extra batteries for radio and flashlight
- ❑ First-aid kit and prescription medicines
- ❑ Clean clothing and sturdy shoes
- ❑ Personal toiletries
- ❑ Sturdy trash bags with ties
- ❑ Extra money and credit cards
- ❑ List of important phone numbers and prepaid phone cards
- ❑ Brief medical history of all family members, including the weight of all children under 90 pounds

To determine whether you should stay in one place, like your home, you should watch TV or listen to the radio to see what officials are recommending for you and your family's safety.

Remember to stay calm and keep your family calm. Consider what measures will be needed if you have a family member with special needs. If you lose power in your home, never use charcoal for heat. Deadly carbon monoxide is released when charcoal burns.

In case you are asked to evacuate, find out in advance how to shut off the electricity, gas and water to your home. Government officials will announce escape routes using the local media.

All families should consider buying a weather alert radio or at least an AM/FM radio that includes the National Weather Service frequency. A weather alert radio will sound an alarm during a storm warning in case there are no tornado sirens in the area where you live.



Remember, the weather and other disasters that could threaten you and your family's health and welfare can be more readily dealt with if you are prepared. For more information on cold weather safety, download a copy of "Extreme Cold: A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety," on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site at: http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/pdf/cold_guide.pdf